REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in view of the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 21-36, 38-41, 43-52 and 62 are present in this application. By this amendment, claims 35 and 36 are amended, and claims 53-61 are canceled. Claims 21-34, 43-52 and 62 stand withdrawn as directed to a non-elected invention.

Claims 35, 38-39 and 41 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,022,672 to Ikeda; Claim 36 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Ikeda in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,723,259 to Oikawa et al.; and Claims 56 and 61 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Ikeda in view of Japanese patent publication No. 10-256344 to Tateyama and U.S. Patent No. 5,273,585 to Shoga et al. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicants appreciate the indication by the Examiner that Claim 35 would be in condition for allowance if the reaction inhibiting section controlled an extent to which the progress of the resolution reaction of the resist is inhibited. Accordingly, Claim 35 has been amended to include the features discussed above as suggested by the Examiner. It is respectfully submitted that Claim 35, as well as Claims 38-41 depending therefrom, are in condition for allowance.

Additionally, the applied art does not teach, disclose or suggest an interface section that includes a reaction inhibiting section for controlling an extent that the progress of the resolution reaction of a resist is inhibited with regard to the resist which is coated onto the substrate and is exposed according to an area of the substrate, as claimed in Claim 36.

The Office Action asserts that Ikeda discloses a second station that includes a cooling section for cooling the substrate heated in the heating section to inhibit the progress of the

resolution reaction of the resist. However, Ikeda merely discloses a substrate processing apparatus as shown in Figure 8 and described in column 14, lines 17-27.

In contrast, according to Claim 36, the interface section includes a reaction inhibiting section placed a position nearer to the aligner side for controlling an extent that the progress of the resolution reaction of a resist is inhibited with regard to the resist which is coated onto the substrate and is exposed according to an area of the substrate. As such, by having the reaction inhibiting section not in the second station having a heating section heating the substrate to progress the resolution reaction of the resist, the substrate immediately after the exposure is prevented from being affected thermally.

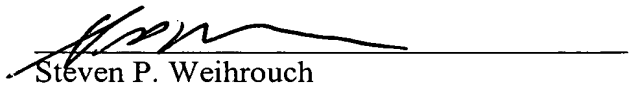
Oikawa does not make up for the deficiencies, nor does the Office Action particularly assert as such, of Ikeda discussed above. That is, Oikawa does not disclose that the interface section includes a reaction inhibiting section placed a position near to the aligner side for controlling an extent that the progress of the resolution reaction of a resist is inhibited with regard to the resist which is coated onto the substrate and is exposed according to an area of the substrate.

Accordingly, the features of the claimed invention are distinguishable from the applied art. The features recited in Claim 36 can have the effect of accurately controlling the progress of resolution reaction. Thus, the degree of resolution reaction becomes uniform, which has a positive effect of uniform line width after the developing process. Adjusting the inhibiting progress of a resolution reaction of a resist can be especially important when chemically amplified resist is used as described in page 87, line 26 to page 89, line 20 of the specification of the present invention.

Consequently, in view of the present amendments and in light of the foregoing comments, it is respectfully submitted that the invention defined by Claims 35, 36, and 38-41 is patentably distinguishing over the applied art. The present application is therefore believed to be in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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